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SUBJECT: HAZARA LEADERS SUPPORT KARZAI IN EXCHANGE FOR PROMISES OF MORE PROVINCES

¶1. Hazara political leaders backing President Karzai's re-election have asked Karzai to support the creation of more majority-Hazara provinces in exchange for their influential endorsements among the ethnic Hazara minority, which could constitute as much as 15 percent of the electorate in this summer's election. Hazara leaders are asking for up to three new provinces created from majority-Hazara districts in other provinces. Such a change would require approval from Parliament and executive branch entities, which has approved the creation of Panjshir and Daikundi provinces since the establishment of the post-Taliban government. Bamyan and Daikundi are currently the only majority-Hazara provinces.

¶2. Bamyan Governor Habiba Sorabi recently told State PRT officer that most Bamyan residents have been waiting to learn which presidential candidate key Hazara leaders will support before deciding for themselves. Populist leaders are hoping to exploit the issue of additional Hazara provinces. Among those, Second Vice President Karim Khalili and Lower House MPs Haji Mohammad Mohaqeq (Kabul) and Ustad Mohammad Akbari (Bamyan) have thrown their support behind Karzai. These leaders have asked Karzai to form more provinces out of Behsud district in Wardak Province, Jaghori district and the surrounding region in Ghazni province, and several Hazara-populated districts north of Bamyan in Samangan, Sar-e-Pul, and Baghlan provinces. The contiguous Behsud district and the Jaghori region could form a single province, or each become its own province. Some Hazara leaders also want Karzai to revisit the recent decision to give the majority-Pashtun Gizab district from Daikundi to Uruzgan Province.

¶3. Mohaqeq told PolOffs he had asked Karzai to sign an agreement exchanging his political party's endorsement in return for Karzai's support of the additional provinces. Karzai declined to put the agreement in writing, though Mohaqeq claims Karzai is committed to the idea. Opposition candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Mirwais Yaseni also have told supporters they support the creation of more Hazara provinces. Another presidential candidate, Ashraf Ghani, told journalists on June 20 that such a decision should be left to Parliament, and not be the price of political negotiations between individuals.

¶4. Comment: Mohaqeq's desire to redraw multiple boundaries in order to provide Hazara areas their own administrative divisions is not new and an idea that has been largely dismissed by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) up to this point. Granting such administrative changes would open up GIRoA to requests for redistricting from other minority groups. End Comment.

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